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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000096

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [EAID](#) [KWBG](#) [QA](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: PROPOSED GAZA RECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS
QATAR-EGYPT RIFT

REF: A. DOHA 86
[1](#)B. DOHA 42

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

Key Points

-- The Turkish political counselor in Qatar confirmed February 8 to Poloff Zebley that PM Erdogan received a personal invitation from Qatar's PM to attend a conference on reconstruction aid for Gaza. He noted, however, that Erdogan is unlikely to attend because of approaching Turkish local elections.

-- However, it is the Turkish Embassy's understanding that discussions on aid for Gaza might be held on the margins of the conference on "alleged Israeli war crimes," February 22-24 in Doha.

-- GOQ officials have been quiet on the issue of holding a Gaza reconstruction conference in Doha. The Office Director for PM Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani offered no information in a February 7 conversation with Ambassador, and the chief MFA conference organizer denied any knowledge of such a conference to Econoff Fabryckcy.

-- The Doha-based Arabic language newspaper Al Arab reported February 8 on page one Egypt's astonishment at the proposed Doha conference, since Egypt plans to host its own conference on Gaza aid March 2, to which Qatar has been invited.

-- The British political counselor told Poloff Caudill February 8 that Qatar's hosting of a conference on Gaza aid was not raised during the recent meeting between the Qatari and UK Prime Ministers; the UK Embassy has no information on any conference.

(C) COMMENTS

-- The absence of media reports and apparent lack of official awareness suggest that any Gaza aid event hosted here is being formulated at the highest levels of the government and remains in the concept stage, perhaps being shopped around to potential participants by Qatar's Prime Minister.

-- That Qatar would propose a conference while Egypt is preparing for its own demonstrates the growing rift between the two countries on aid to Gaza (see Ref A), and more broadly, Qatar's willingness to challenge Egypt's leadership on the Gaza issue (see Ref B).

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (C) Turkish political counselor in Qatar Cevat Ok confirmed to Poloff Zebley on February 8 that PM Erdogan received a personal invitation from PM Al Thani to attend a conference on Gaza aid "in the near future", but stated that no date had been set. He also noted that while the Turkish PM welcomed the conference, he was not likely to attend because of approaching local elections. Ok observed that there is a possibility that discussions on Gaza aid will be held on the margins of the conference on "alleged Israeli war crimes," to be held in Doha on February 22-24.

¶2. (C) GOQ officials have been quiet on hosting a possible Gaza reconstruction conference. In a February 7 conversation with Ambassador, Abdulla Bib Eid Al Suwaiti, Office Director for PM Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani, offered no information on press reports that the PM had spoken with European leaders about the possibility of hosting an event. Similiarly, Abdulla Rahman Fakhroo, Executive Director of the MFA's Permanent Committee for Organizing Conferences, told Econoff Fabrycky February 8 that the committee was unaware of any plans to host a conference in Doha and had not made any preparations.

¶3. (C) The Doha-based Arabic language newspaper Al Arab carried a front page article on February 8 reporting Egypt's astonishment at the proposed conference. Egypt plans to hold its own conference on Gaza aid on March 2, and invited Qatar to participate. An Egyptian MFA spokesman was quoted as saying that Qatar's event was a "distraction", stressing that Egypt would go ahead with plans for its conference. We were unable to reach the Egyptian Embassy in Qatar for comment.

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¶4. (C) British political counselor in Doha James Lynch told Poloff Caudill on February 8 that the possibility of a Doha-hosted conference on Gaza aid was not brought up during the Qatari PM's recent meeting with PM Brown. He stated that the British Embassy in Doha had no information beyond that which had been reported in the press.
LeBaron